

## **Standard Development and Maintenance Procedures for Seafood Standards**

### **1. Scope**

Friend of the Sea standards, distinguished as seafood and non-seafood, are designed with the aim of conserving environmental resources. Seafood standards have a consolidated certification and accreditation program, while non-seafood standards are considered pilot projects. Therefore, they are conducted with different procedures. This procedure document refers only to the development and maintenance of seafood standards.

### **2. Purpose**

This procedure aims to ensure that Friend of the Sea seafood standards are developed and revised in a transparent and robust way. For this, it involves the collaboration of the FOS Technical and Scientific Department, Technical Committee and Board of Directors. In addition, all stakeholders, even if not members of the Technical Committee, can submit input (comments and/or suggestions) at any time on how standards are working and how to improve them. The full guidance is available in the [Stakeholder Input Procedure](#).

### **3. Outset of standard**

- 3.1** When a decision to start a revision process of seafood standards is taken, it is announced in appropriate media channels and the standard under revision is uploaded on the FOS website for a public consultation period of 60 days.
- 3.2** Draft versions of revised and new seafood standards, adjusted according to the inputs received during the public consultation period, once approved by the Technical and Scientific Department, are announced in the same media channels and uploaded on the FOS website for the voting period. This period can last up to 30 days, during which time

further comments are appreciated and can be taken into account in the subsequent revision process.

- 3.3** On each revision process, announcements are made to stakeholders in order to provide information on the scope and objectives of the revision, guidance on the comment process, timelines and decision-making procedures.

#### **4. Terms of Reference (ToR) for revised and new seafood standards**

- 4.1** FOS seafood standards must always have an international geographical application.
- 4.2** FOS seafood standards must always be in alignment with Friend of the Sea's Objectives (available in the [Scheme, Scope and Objectives](#)).
- 4.3** FOS seafood standards must include a rational explanation for:
- 4.3.1** A justification of the need for the standard, including an assessment of the most important environmental issues falling within the scope of the standard;
  - 4.3.2** Whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need;
  - 4.3.3** Documentation of what other standards exist or are in the process of development which meet all or part of the expressed need;
  - 4.3.4** A risk assessment in implementing the standards and how to mitigate them.

#### **5. Content responsibilities**

Revised and new seafood standards are:

- 5.1** Defined, reviewed and revised by the Technical and Scientific Department.
- 5.2** Assessed, verified and approved by the Technical Committee.
- 5.3** Validated by Accredia.
- 5.4** Ratified by the Board of Directors.

## **6. Decision-making thresholds**

In summary, the content of the seafood standards developed or revised by the Technical and Scientific Department is decided as follows:

- 6.1** At the beginning of a public consultation period, Technical Committee members, Advisory Board members and relevant stakeholders are invited to submit their comments on the standard. Likewise, announcements are made so that all stakeholders can participate by sending their comments.
- 6.2** Based on the comments received, the Technical and Scientific Department can apply changes to the standard. In the case of changes, inputs integrated into the standard shall be clearly identified. In any case, the Technical and Scientific Department is in charge to review the compliance of the changes suggested during the revision process.
- 6.3** Technical Committee members are invited to vote on the standard. Their votes determine the approval of the standard.
- 6.4** Accredia validates the final version of the approved standard.
- 6.5** The Board of Directors ratifies the decision of the Technical Committee and Accredia.

## **7. Standard development and revision process**

- 7.1** At least every 5 years, the Technical and Scientific Department analyses and evaluates whether to make changes to its standards. Thus, in order to achieve continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting its objectives, Friend of the Sea can propose new standards and new versions of its current standards to the members of the Technical Committee.
- 7.2** The Technical and Scientific Department requests the Certification Bodies to test the new standard and report on the feasibility (e.g. cost and time) and auditability (e.g. interpretation and consistency) of the requirements prior to finalization of the standard.
- 7.3** The approved standard of fisheries has three years to come into compliance, as a transitional period. On the other hand, the approved standards of Aquaculture and Chain of Custody (CoC) have one year to come into compliance. After this, the standards are considered compulsory.



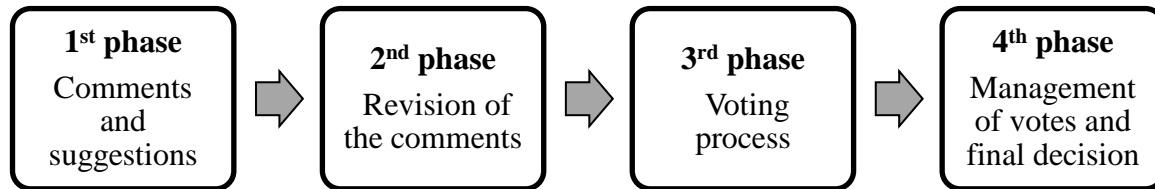
**7.4** Certified companies shall be notified by the Marketing Department about all changes applied to the standard and informed that the certificates previously issued remain valid until their expiry date.

## **8. General responsibilities of a revision process**

<b>Technical and Scientific Department</b> - Setting, reviewing and revising the standard.
<b>Marketing Department</b> - Announcements about the progress of the revision process in appropriate media channels and notifications of approved standards to the certified companies.
<b>Technical Committee members</b> - Assessing, verifying and approving the standard.
<b>Certification Bodies</b> - Conducting an assessment of the feasibility and auditability of the requirements prior to the finalization of the standard.
<b>Accredia</b> - Validating the approved standard.
<b>Board of Directors</b> - Monitoring the progress of the revision processes, being able to comment at any time; - Ratifying the approval and validation of the standard.



## 9. Work plan of a revision process



Friend of the Sea must keep all parties informed and involved throughout the revision process, including the result of the entire process. The procedure must comply with the following steps:

### 9.1 First phase – Comments and suggestions (60 days)

- a. The Technical and Scientific Department sends the revision proposal by email to all members of the Technical Committee, Advisory Board and Board of Directors and uploads the draft version onto the official website for public consultation.
- b. The Marketing Department announces in appropriate media channels that the revision proposal is open for comments and suggestions, together with the necessary guidance for participation.
- c. The Marketing Department notifies Relevant Stakeholders by email that the revision proposal is open for comments and suggestions, including: FAO; Certification and Accreditation Bodies; All FOS certified companies; Consumer associations; Major environmental groups, including those involved in the environmental issue related to the specifically proposed standard revision. If related to the specifically proposed standard revision, the following stakeholders must also be notified: RFMOs; Aquaculture management authorities; Fish workers authorities; Feed / fishmeal / fish oil providers and industry associations.
- d. From the date of revision proposal submission, the members of the Technical Committee, Advisory Board and the stakeholders have 60 days for comments and suggestions.

## **9.2 Second phase – Revision of the comments (at least 21 days)**

- a. At the end of the 60 days reserved for sending comments and suggestions, the Technical and Scientific Department has 7 days to review the inputs and, if necessary, to adjust the draft version of the standard.
- b. Draft proposals can be approved only if the Technical and Scientific Department deems that they comply with the following:
  - ✓ FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries;
  - ✓ They comply with Accredia requirement;
  - ✓ They include clear, specific, objective and verifiable language;
  - ✓ They are expressed in terms of process, management and/or performance criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics;
  - ✓ They do not favour a particular technology, patented item or service provider and attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content.
- c. If draft proposals are not compliant, the Technical and Scientific Department can extend the second phase for another 7 days to provide the necessary changes.
- d. In the case of any changes, inputs integrated into the standard shall be clearly identified.
- e. The Technical and Scientific Department shall request the Certification Bodies to carry out within 14 days an assessment of feasibility and auditability of the draft standard. This assessment shall be taken into consideration by the Technical and Scientific Department for any further adjustments in the Certification Procedure and subsequent revision processes and by the Technical Committee during the voting phase.
- f. If no changes have been applied to the standard, all parties involved in the process are informed by the Technical and Scientific Department about the beginning of the voting process. Likewise, the Marketing Department shall announce in appropriate media channels the beginning of the voting process.

- g. In the case of changes, the Technical and Scientific Department shall upload the revised version onto the official website and inform all parties involved in the process about the beginning of the voting process. Likewise, the Marketing Department shall announce in appropriate media channels that a revised version is available and mention the beginning of the voting process.

### **9.3 . Third phase – Voting process (maximum of 30 days)**

- a. At the end of the second phase, the members of the Technical Committee have up to 30 days to vote on the approval of the revised standard. Votes can be favourable or not. In the case of non-favourable votes, Technical Committee members are invited to provide an argumentation that will be considered by the Technical and Scientific Department and the Board of Directors. The duration of the voting process is variable, since it depends on the participation of the members. The maximum deadline for voting is 30 days. However, once all members of the Technical Committee have voted, the revision process can move forward to the next phase.
- b. During the voting process, additional comments are appreciated. Nonetheless, these comments will be taken into account in the subsequent revision process.

### **9.4 Fourth phase – Management of votes and final decision**


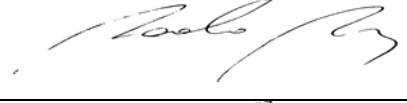
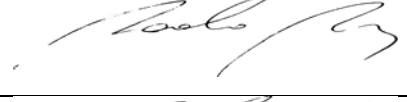
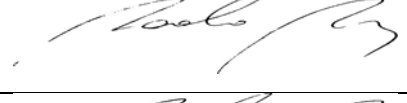
- a. At the end of the voting process, the Technical and Scientific Department shall count the votes. If a member of the Technical Committee does not vote, this abstention is considered as a null vote.
- b. If a majority vote is favorable, the revised standard is considered approved.
- c. If a majority vote is non-favourable, the revised standard is considered not approved.
- d. In the case of a tie vote, the Technical and Scientific Department shall organize a second ballot with the same rules as the first, except that in this case abstention is considered a favorable vote. The voting process ends when the majority of votes is reached.

- e. If the revised standard is not approved, the Technical and Scientific Department shall inform all parties involved throughout the revision process and remove the version under revision from the official website.
- f. If the revised standard is approved, the Technical and Scientific Department shall send the standard to Accredia for a final validation (compliance with ISO 17065 and [RG 19](#)).
- g. The Technical and Scientific Department shall forward the result of the voting process and the assessment made by Accredia to the Board of Directors, which ratifies the decision made by the Technical Committee and Accredia.
- h. After the ratification made by the Board of Directors, the Technical and Scientific Department shall upload the approved standard onto the official website and inform all parties involved, providing instructions on the transition period. Likewise, the Marketing Department shall state on the official website that Friend of the Sea has an approved version available.
- i. At the end of the revision process, a summary of the process describing how comments have been managed by Friend of the Sea is made publicly available and all parties involved throughout the revision process are informed. All the comments received during the public comment period are made publicly available without attribution or identifier.
- j. Stakeholders can register procedural complaints online regarding a revision process. The full guidance is available in the Complaints Procedure. Unsolved complaints shall be assessed during the subsequent revision process.





**Table 1.** Versions of the present document adopted in the preceding period.

<b>Date of revision</b>	<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>	<b>Role of the reviewer</b>	<b>Director's approval</b>
01/02/2016	1	Paolo Bray	Director	
22/02/2016	2	Paolo Bray	Director	
22/02/2017	3	Paolo Bray	Director	
28/11/2018	4	Paolo Bray	Director	
06/09/2019	5	Paolo Bray	Director	